



ACTS

— PART I —

INTRODUCTION

LifePoint,

This book is designed to serve alongside our Spring 2023 sermon series. This spring we will look at the first third of the book of Acts.

The book of Acts is unlike any other book. It tells the story of the early church following the resurrection of Christ. Despite turbulent times, these new followers of Jesus, empowered by the Spirit, work to spread the good news throughout the world.

The hope for this book is that it could be used individually or in LifeGroups the week prior to the corresponding message. Instead of being used as sermon discussion, this book is designed to be sermon preparation.

As always, the goal for this study (or any study) isn't to just increase Bible knowledge. The goal is that we might know and experience the God of the Bible in increasing ways as He transforms us through His Word.

Here are some important need-to-knows.

THREE TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Throughout this book you'll find three different types of questions that seek to engage the learning process. These three questions are woven throughout each section.

What does it say? (*Comprehension*)

What does it mean? (*Interpretation*)

How does it change me? (*Application*)

FORMAT

Each section is set up the same way. To begin, there's a prayer focus and prompt followed by the reference to the sermon text. Then there are discussion questions.

The very last section – Apply It – is designed for you to think about what you've studied and take away a key point.

A WORD TO LIFEGROUP LEADERS

This book is meant to assist you in leading your LifeGroup as we journey thru the Bible. Some of the best learning happens in the context of community. Our prayer is that this guide will help you lead your group to greater relational depth with both God and one another.

Group Goals:

- Pray together
- Read Scripture together
- Think critically and dialogue together
- Apply the text together
- Share about what God is doing in your lives

Please use this book only as a guide; you do not need to answer every question and do every activity each week. Our hope is that there is more content than you will be able to cover and that this guide will simply encourage discussion and participation among group members.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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WANT TO GO DEEPER ON YOUR OWN?

CHECK OUT THESE BOOKS, ARTICLES, VIDEOS, ETC.

BOOKS:

The Mission of the Triune God | Patrick Schreiner

Acts: The Church Afire | R. Kent Hughes

Exalting Jesus in Acts | Tony Merida

FREE ONLINE RESOURCES

Knowing the Bible: Acts

www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/knowning-bible-acts/

- TGC offers a free 12-week online course through Acts.

Bible Hub | <https://biblehub.com>

- Bible Hub is a free online resource that has multiple translations, Strong's Lexicon, commentary, etc.

Overview of Acts | The Bible Project

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/acts/>

- This video gives an animated overview of Acts.

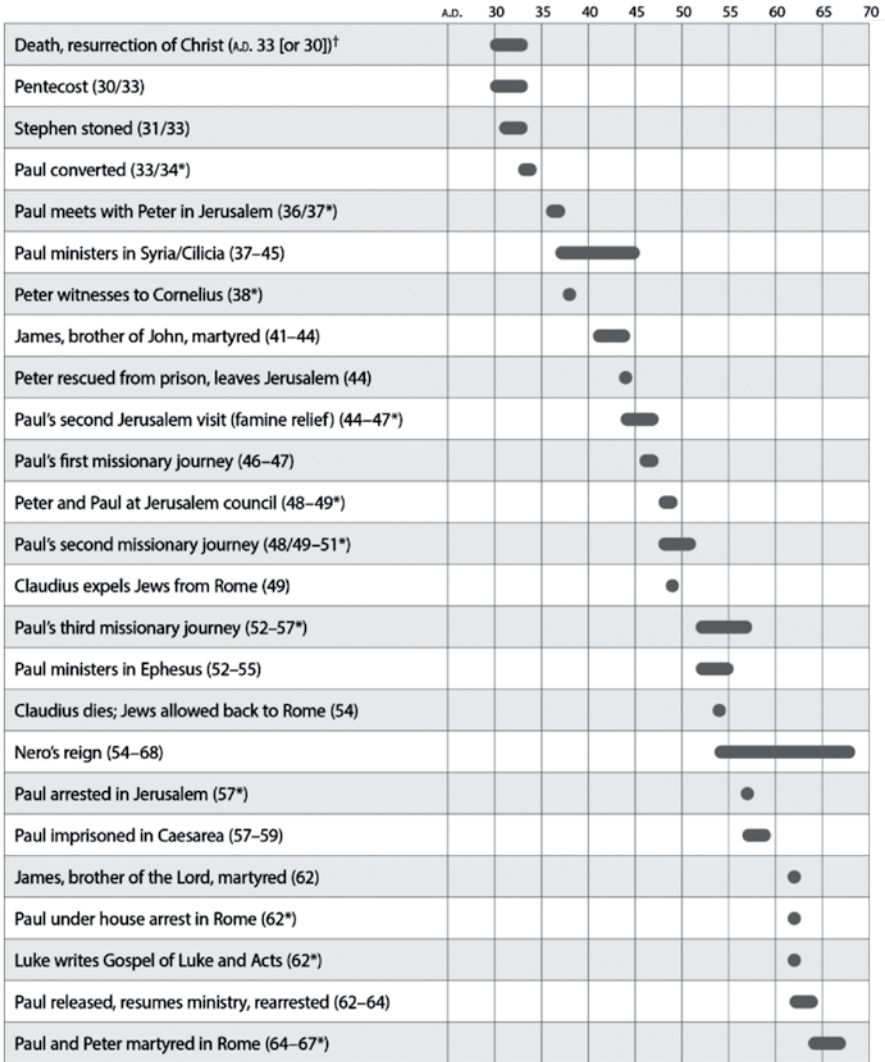
Blue Letter Bible | <https://www.blueletterbible.org>

- BLB is a free online resource with commentaries, Greek & Hebrew resources, concordances, etc.



Map from *Acts* by Darrell L. Bock, page xxi.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS



* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; † see The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion, pp. 1809–1810

Dates are based on The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 2074.

WEEK ONE
PUT ME IN COACH

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS: Sometimes, Acts is referred to as *Acts of the Apostles* because it records what the apostles did after the resurrection of Jesus. However, it could also be thought of as *Acts of the Holy Spirit*, because He worked through many individuals to spread the Kingdom of God.

PRAY ABOUT IT: As we begin this new study on the book of Acts, pray that God would reveal Himself to you in a new way and convict you to live out your faith in new ways.

READ IT: Acts 1:1-26 (But we'll primarily focus on verses 12-26)

DISCUSS IT:

1 – According to **verses 12 and 13**, who returns to Jerusalem? How many were there in total? Why is that significant?

2 – What phrase is used in **verse 14** to describe how the apostles were devoting themselves to prayer? What do you think that means? Read this verse in several different translations to help with your understanding of this verse.

3 – Who else was with the apostles according to the end of **verse 14**? Why is that a big deal? See **John 7:5** for help with your answer. How can that give you hope if you have people in your life who aren't currently following Jesus?

4 – In **verses 16 and 17**, Peter refers to a prophecy in **Psalms 41:9**. How is this verse fulfilled by the actions of Judas in **Matthew 26:47-50**? Why do you think Judas ultimately rejected Jesus, even though he appeared to follow Jesus during his lifetime?

THE UNFORTUNATE CHARACTER OF JUDAS

Judas received the same calling and teaching as the rest of the disciples, but ultimately chose to reject Christ. As far as we know, Judas remained unrepentant to the end and ultimately took his own life.

Judas is a reminder that appearances aren't everything. Judas looked the right way and did the right things, but ultimately, his heart was not committed to Jesus.

Even though the betrayal by Judas was a fulfillment of prophecy (**Psalms 41:9**), Jesus makes it clear in **Mark 14:21** that Judas would be held accountable for his actions.

5 – In **verses 18-19**, we get the gory details of Judas' end. Why do you think the Bible would include these details? What can we learn from the story of Judas?

6 – Peter told the other apostles that they needed to choose a replacement for Judas. What requirements were the apostles looking for according to **verses 21-22**? Why do you think these are important?

7 – After two names were given for consideration, what do the apostles do in **verse 24**? What does this teach us about what we should do when we face difficult decisions? What keeps us from turning to prayer right away?

LUCK OF THE ROLL?

The disciples decided Matthias would join them by casting lots. While it might seem that they were leaving this important decision up to chance, we need to understand how they viewed casting lots.

Casting lots was a practice that was used in the ancient world to attempt to decipher what was the divine will in a particular matter.

Because the outcome produced by casting lots was random, the result was seen as the divine answer to whatever question or situation they were considering.

For more information, check out
Does the Bible Condemn the Casting of Lots?

<https://qrco.de/bdctys>



8 – Given the disciples’ understanding of casting lots (and the fact that they prayed for wisdom before doing so), what does this actually communicate about their trust in God’s sovereignty?

9 – How can this week’s study encourage us that God hasn’t lost control, even when it feels like life is out of control?

AT HOME:

In your own words, write out one thing that really stood out to you in this section.

What is one thing you can focus on this week to apply that truth to your life?

SERMON NOTES

February 19, 2023

WEEK TWO

GOODNESS, GRACIOUS, GREAT TONGUES OF FIRE

RECAP OF ACTS 1:1-26: Following the betrayal and suicide of Judas, the apostles were faced with the task of replacing him. After they went to the Lord in prayer and trusting God would work through the lots they cast, Matthias was chosen to replace Judas.

PRAY ABOUT IT: This week we'll see Peter preach a Spirit empowered sermon that leads to the salvation of many people. Ask God to give you new insight into how He works as we study this passage.

READ IT: Acts 2:1-41

DISCUSS IT:

1 – According to **verse 1** who was all together in one place? Who do you think this includes? For help with your answer, see **Acts 1:13-15**.

2 – The Spirit has eternally existed and was active in the Old Testament under the Old Covenant. In this chapter, the Spirit comes in a unique way. What are some possible reasons God chose to send His Spirit at this particular moment in history?

PENTECOST

As Christians, we often associate Pentecost with this story in **Acts 2**. However, Pentecost, also known as The Feast of Weeks, was one of the three Jewish pilgrimage holidays.

- *Feast of Passover* - Celebration of the angel of death passing over the homes of the Israelites, because the blood of a flawless lamb had been smeared on their doorframes. This directly led to their deliverance from slavery in Egypt.

- *Feast of Weeks* - 50 days after Passover. This event commemorated God giving Moses His Law at Mt. Sinai.

- *Feast of Booths* - Commemorated the Israelites' forty-year journey in the wilderness. For a week, people would come to Jerusalem and live in tents to re-enact living in the wilderness. By doing so, they were reminded of God's faithfulness in bringing them into the Promised Land.

3 – In **verse 3**, we read that “tongues as of fire” came upon the believers. What do you think this signifies? From the following Old Testament passages, what do we learn that fire often represents?

Genesis 15:17-18a -

Exodus 3:2-6 -

Exodus 13:21 -

1 Kings 18:36-39 -

Daniel 7:9-10 -

4 – Based upon your answer above, what is being communicated about this moment? What is different now compared to the Old Testament?

5 – Who was in Jerusalem for this festival, and where are they from (**verses 9-11**)? Why do you think Luke mentions all the areas these people come from?

6 – What do these travelers say in **verses 6 and 11** that helps us understand what “tongues” refers to in this instance?

7 – Read **verses 13-15**. How does Peter respond to being mocked? How can his example help you respond when you feel slighted or mocked for your faith?

8 – Reread Peter’s sermon in **verses 14-36** and summarize the major points of his message.

2:16-21

2:22-24

2:25-28

2:29-35

9 – In **verse 37**, how did Peter’s audience respond to his message? What did Peter tell them they needed to do? How many people in **verse 41** believed in Jesus after hearing Peter’s message?

10 – Share an example of a time when you were “cut to the heart” upon hearing a message. How did you respond?

AT HOME:

In your own words, write out one thing that really stood out to you in this section.

What is one thing you can focus on this week to apply that truth to your life?

SERMON NOTES

February 26, 2023

WEEK THREE
ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

RECAP OF ACTS 2:1-41: Last week, we saw the Holy Spirit come in a new way at Pentecost. Peter boldly proclaimed the good news of Jesus and three thousand came to faith.

PRAY ABOUT IT: As we read God's Word, the Spirit of God makes it come alive to us. Pray that God would make this passage come to life in our hearts.

READ IT: Acts 2:42-47

DISCUSS IT:

1 – According to **verse 42**, what four things did these first members of the early church devote themselves to? Why do you think it was important to prioritize these things?

KOIN-O-NI-A

The members of the early church became much more than acquaintances that shared a worship service. The Greek word for fellowship used in **verse 42** is the word koinonia. It refers to a close, family-like association based upon sharing a common interest (in this case Jesus!).

For more information see,
What is koinonia?

www.gotquestions.org/koinonia.html



2 – What came upon each of them according to **verse 43**? What does this word mean? Why do you think this group of people was feeling that? How can we incorporate this quality into our lives?

3 – In **verse 43**, we're told that many “wonders and signs” were being done by the apostles. How did they know these were of God? Read **Mark 16:20** for help with your answer. Why was this confirmation important for the early church?

4 – What does **verse 44** say these believers had in common? Why do you think this kind of sharing was so important in this moment? How can **verses 44-45** inform how we care for one another?

5 – As you read through this passage, what were some of the behaviors of the early church that stuck out to you? Did anyone command them to act like this? What motivated their behavior?

6 – According to **verse 47**, who was responsible for their increase in number? Why is this significant?

7 – In this passage, we see a large group of people whose daily lives suddenly look very different. What do you imagine the reaction was of those on the outside looking at this community of believers?

8 – What similarities and differences do you see in the community of believers described in this passage and your own community?

9 – What are some tangible things you can do to foster this type of culture in your own community of believers? How can you set aside differences to have “all things in common” for the forwarding of the Gospel?

AT HOME:

In your own words, write out one thing that really stood out to you in this section.

What is one thing you can focus on this week to apply that truth to your life?

SERMON NOTES

March 5, 2023

WEEK FOUR
**BETTER THAN
SILVER OR GOLD**

RECAP OF ACTS 2:42-47: On the heels of Peter's Pentecost sermon, we saw the type of community the Gospel creates. This week, we see Peter preach another sermon. While his Pentecost message was focused on the identity of Jesus, Peter's second message primarily calls Jews to repent for rejecting Jesus.

PRAY ABOUT IT: In this passage, Peter is burdened to see his countrymen come to know Jesus. Pray that God would give you a burden to see people you love come to know Jesus.

READ IT: Acts 3:1-26

DISCUSS IT:

1 – Describe the setting of this passage in **verses 1-3**. In a similar situation, how would you have responded to a complete stranger asking you for a handout?

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

The Beautiful Gate was an entrance to the Temple, and many people passed through it on their way to the Temple courts. Giving money to beggars was considered praiseworthy for Jews, so the beggar wisely placed himself where he'd be seen by a lot of people on their way to worship.

2 – According to **verse 6**, what did Peter give to the beggar instead of silver and gold? How was Peter able to do that? See **Luke 9:1-2** for help with your answer.

3 – In **verse 8**, how did the man respond to being healed? How did the crowd respond in **verses 9-10** to this miracle?

4 – What do these responses show us about how we should respond when we see evidence of God working in our lives? In the lives of others?

5 – According to **verse 11**, to whom did the crowd attribute the miracle? How did Peter respond to them in **verse 12**? What does this tell us about Peter?

6 – After the man is healed, Peter uses this opportunity to address the crowd. What is significant about the timing of his message? Why did he have the attention of the crowd?

7 – What do we learn in **verse 16** actually made the man strong again? Do you think it was the faith of the man or the faith of Peter and John that healed him?

8 – In his message in **verses 13-26**, Peter references several people from the Old Testament. Who are these people, and why do you think Peter mentions them? Why would these names have been significant to the crowd?

9 – In this passage, the crippled man asked for money, but received something completely different. Describe a time when you had a limited scope of what you wanted God to do, but He worked in a different way.

AT HOME:

In your own words, write out one thing that really stood out to you in this section.

What is one thing you can focus on this week to apply that truth to your life?

SERMON NOTES

March 12, 2023

WEEK FIVE
THE BOLD & THE BRAVE

RECAP OF ACTS 3:1-26: Last week, we saw the complete healing of a lame beggar set up an opportunity for Peter to share the Gospel. This week we see the religious establishment get upset with Peter and John for talking about Jesus.

PRAY ABOUT IT: God uses His Word to change people. When we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive (**1 John 1:9**). Ask Him to convict you of sin or show you ways He wants to transform you.

READ IT: Acts 4:1-31

DISCUSS IT:

1 – According to **verses 1-4**:

- a. Who was greatly annoyed by Peter and John's teaching?
- b. Why were they disturbed by what they were teaching?
- c. What was the result of their teaching?

2 – In **verses 5-6**, before whom were Peter and John brought for questioning? Describe the power and influence of these people.

3 – According to **verse 8**, by what power and authority did Peter speak? In your own words, summarize what he conveys to the religious leaders.

4 – **Verse 12** is one of the most important verses in the Bible for understanding the way to salvation. What does this verse teach about the exclusivity of Jesus? Compare this teaching with what Jesus taught in **John 14:6**.

ONE WAY

Claiming Jesus is “the only way” would’ve been considered arrogant, close-minded, and intolerant in that culture. These were fighting words! They’re viewed that way today, too.

“It’s vital to understand that a person’s name held much greater significance in biblical times than it does today. Names were not simply random titles to distinguish someone’s identity. A name represented one’s essential character and personhood. Like a power of attorney, one’s name carried the same weight and authority as the person to whom it was given.”

This is an excerpt taken from “*What does it mean that there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved?*” at Got Questions.



To read the whole article, scan the QR code or go to:
www.gotquestions.org/no-other-name-under-heaven.html

5 – Look up and read **verse 13** in multiple translations. How are Peter and John described? Who was it obvious they had been with?

6 – When we've spent significant time with Jesus, others will notice it. How can **verse 13** give us confidence to share about Jesus (evangelism) or be used in helping someone else grow in their faith (discipleship)?

7 – **Verses 14-18** give us insight into the religious leaders' deliberations. What command did the religious leaders give Peter and John about speaking in Jesus' name?

8 – How do Peter and John respond to their command? What can their response teach us about how we should respond if similar commands come our way?

9 – In **verses 24-30**, what was the believers' first response to Peter and John being released from prison?

10 – What does their prayer request teach us about them? How can that inform how we view our circumstances?

11 – What does **verse 31** tell us about how God felt about their prayers? What can this teach us about prayer?

AT HOME:

In your own words, write out one thing that really stood out to you in this section.

What is one thing you can focus on this week to apply that truth to your life?

SERMON NOTES

March 19, 2023

WEEK SIX
LIAR, LIAR

RECAP OF ACTS 4:1-31: Last week, we saw Peter boldly state that there is salvation in no other name but Jesus.

PRAY ABOUT IT: This week we will see that God always keeps His Word. Ask God to help you believe the promises of His Word.

READ IT: Acts 4:32-5:11

DISCUSS IT:

1 – Fill in the following blanks from **verses 32-33**.

Now the full number of those who believed were of _____
heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged
to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with
_____ power the apostles were giving their testimony
to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and _____ grace
was upon them all.

What are the kinds of things these believers (and apostles) had seen
and done previously that motivated them to live like this?

2 – What do you think “great power” means in **verse 33**? What was the purpose of that great power?

3 – This group was given the gift of “great grace.” Why do you think great grace was needed for these new believers? What would it look like to live a life of great grace in today’s world?

4 – These believers lived generously. How is experiencing “great grace” (**verse 33**) connected to living generously? Are there areas in your life where you find it difficult to live generously (time, talent, treasure)? Why or why not?

5 – These verses don’t teach that Christians aren’t allowed to own property or accumulate possessions. However, why do you think these first believers chose to pool their resources?

6 – **Acts 5:1** begins with a contrast word that links these two stories. What should that word prepare us for?

7 – Put into your own words what Ananias and Sapphira do. How are their actions different than those of the believers in **Acts 4:32-37**?

8 – According to **verse 3**, who does it say filled their hearts to lie? Why are their actions such a big deal?

10 – What happens to Ananias in **verse 5** and to Sapphira in **verse 10**? Why did their punishment for lying need to be so severe? What can we learn about God from that?

11 – Where have you seen someone live like the believers in **Acts 4:32-37**? Where have you been tempted to hold something back and lie about it like Ananias and Sapphira? What is one action step you can take to live more generously this week?

AT HOME:

In your own words, write out one thing that really stood out to you in this section.

What is one thing you can focus on this week to apply that truth to your life?

SERMON NOTES

March 26, 2023

WEEK SEVEN
CAN'T STOP, WON'T STOP

RECAP OF ACTS 4:32-5:11: Last week, we saw two contrasting stories – generous giving and deceitful greed. This week we'll again see contrasting ideas – faithfully serving Jesus results in both opposition and blessing.

PRAY ABOUT IT: As Christians, we're called to be faithful and leave the results to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into faithful living and to enable you to be content with leaving the results to Him.

READ IT: Acts 5:12-42

DISCUSS IT:

1 – According to **verse 12**, where did this story take place? What is that, and why do you think it was significant that it took place in this location? You may have to look this up.

2 – People were enthralled with the ministry done by the apostles. According to **verse 15**, what would people do to get people near the apostles? Why did they do this?

3 – According to **verse 16**, what percentage of people brought to the apostles received healing? How do the signs the apostles perform connect with the message Jesus had given them?

4 – The religious leaders don't like what the apostles are doing. According to **verse 17**, why are they upset? Why do you think they felt like that?

WHO'S WHO?

Scan the QR Code and fill out the chart.
Write down the differences and similarities
between the Sadducees and Pharisees.



SADDUCEES

BOTH

PHARISEES

5 – Where in your own life have you found yourself jealous of others? How have your actions and thoughts been affected in those moments?

6 – Put into your own word what happens in **verses 17-28**.

7 – What are Peter and the apostles told they're not allowed to do? In **verse 29-32**, how do they respond? What gave them the confidence to respond like that? What can we learn about living for God from them?

8 – Peter's response made the Sadducees want to kill him. Why do you think his response enraged them so much? See **Matthew 22:23** for help with your answer.

9 – In **verse 34**, who intervened between the apostles and the Jewish leaders? How is he described? According to **Acts 22:3**, who was one of his students?

10 – How would you summarize Gamaliel’s counsel? What truths about God does he proclaim? How can this encourage us even today?

AT HOME:

In your own words, write out one thing that really stood out to you in this section.

What is one thing you can focus on this week to apply that truth to your life?

SERMON NOTES

April 2, 2023

WEEK EIGHT
GROWING PAINS

RECAP OF ACTS 5:12-42: Last week, we saw that faithfully serving Jesus led to opposition, but also blessing. This week some conflict the early church faced and how they dealt with it.

PRAY ABOUT IT: Pray that God would help us remember who He is so that we will trust in Him instead of our plans. Pray that He would help us really believe that His will is best for our lives.

READ IT: Acts 6:1-7

DISCUSS IT:

1 – From **verse 1**, describe what was happening in the church – both positive and negative.

2 – The ESV says “A complaint against the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews.” Look up **verse 1** in the NLT. How does this translation add to our understanding of what was actually happening?

TWO GROUPS OF JEWS?

The Hebrews were Jews more inclined to embrace Jewish culture and were mostly from Judea. The Hellenists were Jews more inclined to embrace Greek culture and were mostly from the Diaspora (a term used to describe Jews scattered across the Roman Empire). To oversimplify, Hebrews tended to regard Hellenists as unspiritual compromisers blending Jewish faith with Greek culture. Hellenists regarded Hebrews as holier-than-thou traditionalists. There was already suspicion between the two groups, and Satan tried to take advantage of that standing suspicion.

3 – It seems that the complaint of the Hellenistic Jews was a legitimate concern. How can we balance bringing a genuine issue to light versus complaining and grumbling?

4 – In **verse 3**, what solution do the apostles come up with? What characteristics were they looking for? Why do you think those were the most important qualities?

5 – The apostles agree that something needs to be done, but they don't drop everything they're already doing to personally meet the need. Why?

6 - What does this passage teach us about the different and necessary roles in the life of a church?

GIVE THEM A HAND

In this story, the apostles appointed seven men and “laid their hands on them.” Throughout the Bible, “laying of hands” is a way of symbolically commissioning someone for a specific spiritual task. It is a visible sign publicly marking the beginning of a new ministry and asking God to bless that endeavor.

In **Deuteronomy 34**, Moses “laid his hands” on Joshua. In **1 Timothy 5:22**, Paul urges Timothy “not to hastily lay hands on anyone.”

7 – Read Ephesians 4:11-13. According to these verses, what are the primary purposes for leaders in the church? What then are the primary purposes for each of us?

8– Share an example of how you’ve seen someone serve in a meaningful way behind the scenes.

9 – The problem here in **Acts 6** had the potential to derail a very young and fragile church. But how does this story end in **verse 7**? How does this help us think about conflict and problems?

AT HOME:

In your own words, write out one thing that really stood out to you in this section.

What is one thing you can focus on this week to apply that truth to your life?

SERMON NOTES

April 16, 2023

WEEK NINE
STICKS & STONES

RECAP OF ACTS 6:1-7: Last week, we saw a problem arise in the church between two different groups of people. The apostles responded by appointing others to address the need so that the church would continue to thrive. This week, we see the story of one of those individuals, a man named Stephen.

PRAY ABOUT IT: Pray that God would give you an understanding heart to know what He is saying in this passage and what He wants you to learn from it.

READ IT: Acts 6:8-8:3

DISCUSS IT:

1 – Look back at the first few verses of **chapter 6**. Put into your own words who Stephen was and the task he and the others were supposed to do.

2 – Stephen first served widows and cared for the forgotten, but apparently, this had such an impact that it landed him in front of the High Priest, scribes, and elders. How can good deeds lead to opportunities to share about Jesus? If possible, share an example from your own experience.

3 – What are some reasons why those in the synagogue stirred up hatred toward Stephen and the other believers? How is this reminiscent of what happened at the trial of Jesus?

4 – According to **verse 15**, how is Stephen’s face described as he’s brought before the counsel? What do you think that symbolized?

5 – Stephen modeled **Philippians 4:4-7**. Write out these verses in your own words. How can we allow “the peace of God” to guard our hearts and minds? What does that realistically look like?

6 – In **Acts 7:1**, the high priest asked Stephen a “yes” or “no” question, but how does Stephen respond? What does Stephen model for us by taking this opportunity?

7 – Read Stephen’s speech in **verses 2-50**. Make a list of some of the people he mentions, and how their stories lead to Jesus.

8 – Read **7:51-53**. How would you put into modern words the way Stephen ends his speech?

9 – There are many similarities between Stephen's life and the life of Jesus. What are some of their last words?

Stephen (**Acts 7:59-60**):

Jesus (**Luke 23:46 & 23:34**):

What does this show us about Stephen's faith? How can we have a similar disposition to that of Stephen?

10 – At the stoning of Stephen, who are we introduced to? Describe his role in Stephen's murder. What do we learn about him and what he thought about Christians at this point in his life?

11 – If you were a Christian at this moment, what thoughts and emotions would you be having, and what would be your overall outlook? How can we have hope even when we're having similar thoughts?

AT HOME:

In your own words, write out one thing that really stood out to you in this section.

What is one thing you can focus on this week to apply that truth to your life?

SERMON NOTES

April 23, 2023

WEEK TEN
NOT FOR SALE

RECAP OF ACTS 6:8-8:3: Last week, we saw the Gospel go forward, despite severe persecution. As believers scattered from Jerusalem, they took the message of Jesus with them. This week we'll see the message go from Judea to Samaria.

PRAY ABOUT IT: Ask the Lord to open your eyes to the importance of His Word as you look at it with one another. We need His help to challenge and encourage one another as we await His return.

READ IT: Acts 8:4-25

DISCUSS IT:

1 – According to **verses 1 and 4**, what was the result of the persecution against the Jerusalem church? How does this persecution actually bring about what Jesus had commanded His disciples in **Acts 1:8**?

2 – Who is re-introduced in **verse 5**? Where does he go? What is his message?

3 – Why is it significant that he went to a city in Samaria? See **John 4:4-9, 28-30** for help with your answer.

4 – According to **verses 6-7**, why did the crowd pay attention to Philip? What did he do? What was the result of Philip's visit to that city in **verse 8**?

5 – In these few verses, we see persecution (something negative) create the opportunity for the Gospel (something positive) to go to people who might not have otherwise received it. When have you seen God bring something positive despite opposition and setbacks?

6 – Read **verse 9** in a couple different translations. What character is introduced, and what do we find out about him? If he lived in our world, who might you compare him to?

7 – Summarize what happens in **verses 12-13**. If you were present in the story, what would you be thinking at this point about the change in Simon's life?

TRANSITION FROM OLD TO NEW

We find out in **verses 15-16** that the Samaritans had not yet received the Holy Spirit, even after they had believed in Jesus and been baptized. We have to keep in mind that the book of Acts is a history of the early church and a record of the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. As with any transition, there is a period of time where things overlap.

The Samaritans' manner of receiving the Spirit is an accurate account of what happened. However, it should be noted (as will also happen with the Gentiles), that the first time the Gospel goes to this distinct group of people, the Holy Spirit doesn't come until after two apostles – Peter and John – arrived to pray for them.

For more information about how to understand this event, check out
“*Why had the believers in Samaria not received the Holy Spirit?*”



www.gotquestions.org/Acts-8-receive-Holy-Spirit.html

8 – What does Simon do in **verses 18-19**? What does this reveal about Simon's motivations? How does Peter respond to him in **verses 20-23**?

9 – How does Simon respond in **verse 24** to Peter's rebuke? How can his response inform how we should think about being confronted? What's often our natural inclination when someone confronts us?

10 – In this passage, Simon tries to “buy” the power of the Holy Spirit. While we might not try to do that, how have you been tempted “to buy” God’s favor? What is the only true way to receive God’s blessings?

AT HOME:

In your own words, write out one thing that really stood out to you in this section.

What is one thing you can focus on this week to apply that truth to your life?

SERMON NOTES

April 30, 2023

WEEK ELEVEN

STRAIGHT OUTTA SAMARIA

RECAP OF ACTS 8:4-25: Last week, we saw the spread of the Gospel to Samaria through Philip, and the way Simon the Sorcerer responded to it. This week we see Philip on his next assignment.

PRAY ABOUT IT: Pray that God would give you the sight to see what He wants you to see. Like the Ethiopian eunuch, who we'll study this week, pray that God gives you a desire to know Him and His Word more.

READ IT: Acts 8:26-40

DISCUSS IT:

1 – According to **verse 26**, where is Philip told to go? How is it described? *See the map on page 6 to see his journey.*

2 – Who does Philip encounter? List the specific ways this person is described in **verses 27-28**. What do all of these details tell us about him?

3 – According to **verse 29**, what does the Spirit direct Philip to do?

4 – What pattern does Philip model in how he responds to God (**verses 27 and 30**)? What does this tell us about Philip?

5 – In **verses 32-33**, what passage is the Ethiopian reading? Does he understand what he's reading? Why or why not?

6 – How does Philip respond in **verse 35**? We aren't told exactly what he said, but what kinds of things do you think Philip said?

7 – Philip was obedient to follow God's leading and took the opportunity to share about Christ when it was presented. What are things that can keep you from doing the same? What mindset or abilities did Philip have that we can learn from?

8 – According to **verses 36-38**, how did the eunuch respond to what Philip had said? Do you think his response is surprising? Why or why not?

9 – This story ends very strangely in **verses 39-40**. What happens? Give some possible reasons for this ending.

10 – In this passage, God directs Philip without always giving him a full explanation, and Philip is obedient to follow. Share an example of a time when you followed the Lord's leading and only later understood what God was doing.

AT HOME:

In your own words, write out one thing that really stood out to you from this section.

What is one thing you can focus on this week to apply that truth to your life?

SERMON NOTES

May 7, 2023

WEEK TWELVE
BLINDED BY THE LIGHT

RECAP OF ACTS 8:26-40: Over the last few weeks, we saw the conversion of “outsiders” – Samaritans and an Ethiopian. This week we see an even more surprising convert – Saul.

PRAY ABOUT IT: God promises that His Word has supernatural power. Pray that we would see God move in power to see kingdom expansion like they did in Acts.

READ IT: Acts 9:1-19

DISCUSS IT:

1 – According to **verses 1-2**, who is Saul seeking to arrest and kill? What was his motivation for that? Read **Philippians 3:5-6** for help with your answer.

2 – In **verses 4-5**, who does Jesus say Saul is actually persecuting? What does this teach us?

FROM TERRORIST TO EVANGELIST

Check out this video from *The Bible Project* for more context on the conversion of Saul.



<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/gospel-acts-2/>

3 – Describe Saul’s encounter with Jesus in your own words (**verses 3-9**). What would you have been thinking and feeling in this moment if you were Saul? What would you have thought about during the three days of blindness?

4 – What scene change happens in **verses 10-14**? What did God instruct this man to do? How did Ananias respond? How would you have responded?

5 – What does Jesus’ unifying of Ananias and Saul teach us about how we should view other Christians?

6 – Saul once lived to persecute Christians. In **verse 15**, how does he understand his new purpose? What does this radical change show us about God? About other people? About us?

7 – In **verse 17**, how does Ananias address Saul? Why is that title significant for Saul? For Ananias?

8 - Read **verses 18-19**. What does Saul do immediately after regaining his sight? Why is this response important?

AN OUTWARD SIGN OF AN INWARD REALITY

Baptism is a visible, public profession of a person's faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Baptism doesn't make you a follower of Jesus, but it publicly identifies you as one. It is an outward expression of an inward change. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (**Ephesians 2:8-9**)

Baptism is a living picture of our new life as a follower of Jesus and represents our union with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection.

9 – Look up **1 Timothy 1:12-17**. Years later, how does Paul describe his conversion? What is his explanation of Jesus showing such abundant mercy to him?

10 – Like Saul, share with your group how you've experienced God showing you abundant mercy.

11 – Out of all those opposed to Jesus, why do you think God showed up like this to Saul? What does this tell us about God?

AT HOME:

In your own words, write out one thing that really stood out to you in this section.

What is one thing you can focus on this week to apply that truth to your life?

SERMON NOTES

May 14, 2023

WEEK THIRTEEN
**PROOF IS IN THE
PREACHING**

RECAP OF ACTS 9:1-19: Last week, we looked at Saul's stunning conversion from persecuting followers of Jesus to becoming a follower of Jesus. This week we'll begin looking at Paul's early ministry.

PRAY ABOUT IT: The conversion of Saul shows us that God is able to transform anyone's life. Pray that you would become more aware of how God is at work in you and in those around you.

READ IT: Acts 9:20-31

DISCUSS IT:

1 – It's easy to imagine how the early church in both Jerusalem and Damascus would question the sincerity of Saul's conversion. Contrast this week's verses with **Acts 9:1-2**. How were the disciples' fears relieved?

2 – What words are used in **verses 22, 28-29** to describe Saul's work among the Jews? What happened to make him like that? Why can we understand the surprise of the Jews?

3 – Imagine being in Damascus and listening to Saul for the first time. What might have stuck out to you about him?

4 – **Verse 23** tells us that the Jewish leaders in Damascus developed a plot to kill Saul. Why did they consider him to be such a threat to them and their followers?

5 – Read **Galatians 1:17-18**. These verses tell us that Saul spends three years in Arabia before going up to Jerusalem. What do you imagine were some of God's purposes for Saul during those three years?

6 – According to **verse 27**, who introduces Saul to the apostles? What risks is he taking by supporting someone like Saul? What happens as a result of his support of Saul?

7 – Barnabas models doing what he knew was right, even though it had the potential to not be received well. Share about a time in your life when you or someone else stood up for the right thing even when it wasn't popular.

8 – Think about this whole story (all of **Acts 9:1-31**). What are some lessons God wants to teach us through Saul's conversion? Why are these important?

9 – Read the ending of this chapter in **verse 31**. Which of the following have you personally grown in through being part of a church community? In which area would you like to grow?

- Enjoying peace
- Being strengthened/built up
- Walking in the fear of the Lord
- Being encouraged by the Holy Spirit
- Increasing in numbers

AT HOME:

In your own words, write out one thing that really stood out to you from this study on the first part of the book of Acts.

What is one thing you can do to keep applying that truth as the study is finished?

SERMON NOTES

May 21, 2023

